

Alaska

Exotic Plant Management Team

Partner Parks (all located in the state of Alaska): Alagnak NW&SR, Aleutian WWII NHA, Aniakchak NM&Pr, Bering Land Bridge NPr, Cape Krusenstern NM, Denali NP&Pr, Gates of the Arctic NP&Pr, Glacier Bay NP&Pr, Katmai NP&Pr, Kenai Fjords NP, Klondike Gold Rush NHP, Kobuk Valley NP, Lake Clark NP&Pr, Noatak NPr, Sitka NHP, Wrangell-St. Elias NP&Pr, Yukon-Charley Rivers NPr

Accomplishments

Inventoried Acres	6,059
Gross Infested Acres	2,082
Infested Acres	9.342
Treated Acres	2.013
Monitored Acres	0
Retreated Acres	0
Restored Acres	0
Controlled Acres	0
Time Lost due to Injury	0

Alaska does not strike most people as a place where exotic plants would be of great concern, due to its climate, latitude, and relative isolation. While exotic plants are mostly limited in distribution to areas of human disturbance, there are indications that they are quickly spreading and that several species may be able to colonize native ecosystems. The potential for these species to disperse via glacial river systems and benefit from climatic warming presents a very real ecological threat to Alaska's vast wilderness. Unlike the rest of the country, we still have the chance to prevent the arrival of exotic plants in most areas of the state. To accomplish this goal, the Alaska EPMT has adopted the approach of early detection and rapid response to exotic plant infestations.

This year was the first for the EPMT program in Alaska and saw the third season of exotics inventory in the National Park units through an interagency agreement with the Biological Research Division of the USGS. The inventory is essential for providing baseline information on the current distribution and abundance of each exotic species. We are also working with the US Forest Service and the University of Alaska to develop a statewide database and website for collaborative tracking of exotic plant arrivals and distributions. The species of greatest concern at this point are white and yellow sweetclover and bird vetch, all of which are on the move and tend to form thick infestations.

The EPMT Liaison was hired in June to build upon the inventory with control efforts, education and outreach, and strategic prevention of exotic plant proliferation. Control is still possible in Alaska using manual and mechanical methods, with techniques that vary by



Pulling up white sweetclover at the entrance to Denali NP&Pr

species and according to the resources and logistical challenges of our far-flung parks. Rather than hiring a crew to perform this work, we are working with park staff, volunteers, and other agencies to find creative ways to accomplish control.

Raising awareness about exotic plants in Alaska is critical to their management, particularly among those involved in soil-disturbing activities. Through participation in the interagency Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plant Management and media outreach, we are bringing the issue to the attention of the public and working with other researchers and managers to identify key species and habitats for control. On this basis, the summer of 2004 will see a flurry of activity as we implement projects in more than half of the region's parks. Alaska is unique in many ways, not the least of which is the widespread persistence of intact native ecosystems. The Alaska EPMT aims to see it remain that way.

Target Weed Species

White/Yellow Sweetclover
Bird (Tufted) Vetch
Japanese Knotweed
Narrowleaf Hawksbeard
Butter-and-Eggs (Toadflax)
Oxeye-Daisy
European Mountain Ash
Common Dandelion
European Stickseed
Bigleaf Lupine